

**FAIRBANKS METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM  
POLICY COMMITTEE**

**State of Alaska, DOT&PF, Main Conference Room  
2301 Peger Road  
Fairbanks, Alaska**

**Meeting Minutes  
January 25, 2008**

**1. Call to Order**

Steve Titus called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**2. Introduction of Members and Attendees**

The following were present:

- \* FMATS Policy Committee members
- \*\* FMATS Staff members
- \*\*\* FMATS Technical Committee members

NAME	REPRESENTING
* Steve Titus (Chair)	DOT&PF, Regional Director, Northern Region
* Mike Schmetzer	Representing Mayor Terry Strle, City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Jim Whitaker	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Luke Hopkins	Borough Assembly Representative, FNSB
* Chad Roberts	City Council Representative, City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Doug Isaacson	City of North Pole (absent)
* Tom Chapple	DEC, Director, Air Quality Division
*** Ethan Birkholz	DOT&PF, Planning
*** Joan Hardesty	DEC
*** Bill Butler	City of North Pole
*** Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks
** Jeff Roach	DOT&PF, Fairbanks Area Transportation Planner
** Alexa Greene	DOT&PF, Fairbanks Area Assistant Transportation Planner
** Todd Boyce	FNSB, Planning
Dave Bloom	DOT&PF, D&ES Chief
Ron King	DOT&PF
Jennifer Yuhas	FNSB
Bob Tilley	
Emma Wilson	Downtown Association of Fairbanks
Bill Stringer	FNSB Assembly Member
Jackson Fox	City of Fairbanks
Tim Beck	FNSB Assembly Member
Gerald Rafson	DOT&PF, Planning Chief
James Conner	FNSB, Air Quality
David Leone	FNSB, Transportation
Jerry Colp	City of Fairbanks

**3. Public Comments**

Tim Beck requested that DOT&PF maintain the right of way better and clear trees so the driving public can see moose coming out of the woods.

Emma Wilson, Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA), reiterated enthusiasm for the resolution before the Policy Committee regarding downtown air quality. The DTA is in a partnership with the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to determine the ramifications of offering an urban existence where residents and visitors can all give up cars for the downtown environment. Ms. Wilson also told the group about the Yukon Quest Feast is on February 9.

David Leone, FNSB Transportation, informed the Policy Committee that FNSB Transit has reinstituted the Gray Line service along Farmer's Loop effective last Monday.

**4. Approval of the January 25, 2008 Agenda**

- **MOTION** to approve the January 25, 2008 agenda as presented (Hopkins/Whitaker). No opposition. Approved.

**5. Approval of December 19, 2007 Policy Committee minutes**

- **MOTION** to approve the December 19, 2007 minutes as presented. (Whitaker/Schmetzer). No opposition. Approved.

**6. Committee Reports**

**a. FMATS Coordinator Hiring Committee**

Luke Hopkins informed the Policy Committee that the subcommittee was in the final stages of interviews and would be making an offer soon.

**b. FMATS Technical Committee**

Ethan Birkholz presented the action items from the Technical Committee meeting.

**7. Old Business**

**a. Statewide Transportation Plan Public Comments**

Jeff Roach informed the Policy Committee that the public comment period has been extended to February 1<sup>st</sup> and that the approved FMATS comments were sent to Headquarters on January 16th. The project manager Eric Taylor informed Mr. Roach that all public comments are available to read online at:

<http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/areaplans/lrtpp/Comments.shtml>

Luke Hopkins informed the Policy Committee that the Alaska Municipal League and the Conference of Mayors met earlier this week and discussed the statewide plan. Mr. Hopkins expressed his appreciation for the strong comments that the FMATS group made and that information for the Alaska Railroad Fairbanks-North Pole project was also included.

**8. New Business**

**a. Transportation Funding Presentation**

Ron King, DOT&PF, Chief, Surface Transportation Programs, spoke about issues surrounding surface transportation funding. The major funding

issues that concerns transportation in Alaska are:

- **Construction Inflation**  
As oil prices rise the cost of construction is also on the raise. The Alaska costs are approximately two times the national average.
- **The STIP Cycle**  
The next major amendment to the STIP will be early in 2008 and will take place after the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan is completed. The STIP can't be amended until after the SwTPP is approved. The STIP is a 4-year document and there are new rules that govern STIP management.
- **The Status of the Highway Trust Fund**  
The FFY2009 balance is approximately \$4 billion over-programmed and if it were to be balanced each state would have to reduce spending by 40% or a total \$16 billion. Congress continues to fund transportation at a high rate. Ron King stated a long term fix is uncertain.
- **New Federal STIP Rules**  
When a project has significant changes to cost, schedule, scope or funding source it now triggers a STIP amendment. Amendments take a minimum of 90 days to complete, must go through the public process, and must get both FHWA and FTA approval. This will cause significant project delays and will increase frustration with the process from both the public and staff members.

With the new federal STIP rules it will create an environment where cost estimation will be more detailed and estimates will be higher to alleviate the potential of delaying projects with future amendments.

- **The Change in Climate and Transportation**  
The next big issue for the federal transportation program is green house gasses (GHG). This could impact transportation with urban areas becoming less reliant on automobiles and more reliant on transit and rural areas struggling because their only mode of transportation is either aviation or ferries which contribute more GHG than automobiles. Future funding may be tied to reducing GHG, which will be tough on Alaska as a whole.

**b. CMAQ Funding change to PM 2.5 Reductions**

Jeff Roach explained that the TIP was previously programmed with \$650,000 for the PM 2.5 Reduction Project and \$350,000 for the low sulfur fuels impact study for FY 2008. It was determined that the low sulfur fuel study no longer needed funding. The FMATS Technical Committee recommended reprogramming the \$350,000 in CMAQ funding to the PM 2.5 Reduction Project. In addition to that, FMATS received an additional

\$1.25 million in CMAQ funding and State of Alaska match of \$90,300, for a total of \$2,340,300 in FY08.

The FMATS Technical Committee recommended the Policy Committee program the entire CMAQ funding allocation to the PM 2.5 Reductions Project in FY 08. A scope is in place for the initial \$1 million of funding. The FNSB and DEC are currently working on a scope for the additional funding. The intent of the project is to identify the boundary of the PM 2.5 non-attainment area, to identify sources of PM 2.5, and develop proposed PM 2.5 reduction strategies.

- **Motion:** Move to adopt the funding changes as presented by the Technical Committee.  
Tom Chapple moved, Luke Hopkins seconded.

Tom Chapple commented that he appreciated the support for CMAQ projects but said that the Policy Committee needs to see the scope for the additional \$1.3 million in CMAQ funding. As the Technical Committee gets the scope for the rest of the funding he would like them to come back to Policy Committee with a full discussion of the proposal.

The first motion withdrawn by Tom Chapple, he then restated the motion:

- **Motion:** To approve the funding changes for the CMAQ PM 2.5 Reductions project, with the understanding that a detailed scope will be presented to the FMATS Policy Committee before work proceeds with the additional funding. The approved funding changes are as follows:  
Previous funding amount, \$650,000  
Add remaining Low Sulfur Fuels Impact Study funds of \$350,000  
Add additional \$1,250,000 FMATS CMAQ Allocation  
Add State match amount \$90,300  
Total amount, \$2,340,300

Tom Chapple moved, Luke Hopkins seconded. None opposed.  
Motion passed.

**c. Downtown Fairbanks Air Quality Resolution**

Luke Hopkins discussed the need for an air quality analysis for the impacted area in the Vision Fairbanks Master Plan. The intent of the resolution is to support an early analysis of the overall air quality issues for downtown Fairbanks and support the Downtown Association's work. Mr. Hopkins reiterated that the FMATS body is not obligating any money, just stating that an air quality analysis is a good idea and FMATS supports it.

Luke Hopkins moved to approve the Resolution as presented and Mike Schmetzer, Representative for Mayor Terry Strle seconded the motion.

Tom Chapple suggested changing the working within the "Now Therefore Be it Resolved..." to clarify the proposed action.

- **Motion:** To approve FMATS Resolution 2008-01, titled "An FMATS Resolution in support of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks providing an air quality analysis of the combined traffic impacts projected in the "Vision Fairbanks Plan," as amended in the attached document.

Luke Hopkins moved, Mike Schmetzer, Representative for Mayor Terry Strle seconded. None opposed. Motion passed.

Additional discussion focused on if the resolution should also include a PM 2.5 analysis. Jim Connor, from FNSB Air Quality, stated that until the PM 2.5 issues are well defined including PM 2.5 in the analysis would introduce a significant delay. Emma Wilson, DTA, also stated that PM 2.5 was not part of the air quality study currently proposed.

**d. TIP Update and Construction Obligation for 2008**

Jeff Roach discussed two significant changes to the current TIP. The first was the increase to the Illinois Street Phase 2 for \$500,000 in FY 08 and the second was the approval of the FY08 CMAQ funding.

Mr. Roach presented the status of the FMATS construction projects for the upcoming construction season. Second Avenue/Wilbur Widening started last summer and is approximately 60% complete, with the contractor completing the work on a significant portion of Second Avenue. Van Horn Rehabilitation was awarded on December 24, 2007 and no work has been completed at this time. There are also five projects that are on the National Highway System within the FMATS area. Those projects are the Parks Hwy MP 351-356 Rehabilitation, 90% complete; the Richardson Highway MP 350 (roundabouts), 97% complete; the Richardson Highway North Pole Interchange (Garvee), 10% complete; the Steese Expressway MP 0-2, awarded on August 28, 2007 with no work completed; and the Steese Expressway MP 2-5, 76% complete.

**e. 2030 Let's Get Moving Plan, Statewide Transportation Policy Plan (SwTPP)**

Ron King, Chief, DOT&PF Surface Transportation Programs, gave a SwTPP presentation. The Long Range Plan addresses the State's responsibilities to the Alaska Transportation System. Mr. King noted that the plan must be approved prior to amending the STIP. Currently the State of Alaska relies heavily on Federal funding; this plan shows that the State of Alaska needs to start funding its own projects and to initiate ways to find funding areas within the State of Alaska.

**9. Public Comment**

Tim Beck was on the FNSB Assembly when a resolution was passed supporting the Dawson Road Extension Project. He talked about how the project will reduce EMS response time, create a more direct route to the Richardson Highway, and will reduce area roads being utilized as alternative shortcuts.

**10. Other Issues**

**11. Informational Items**

**a. Bentley Trust Area New Commercial Development**

Jerry Rafson stated that a consultant firm, Lounsbury & Associates, approached DOT&PF regarding access to 36 acres being developed in the Bentley Trust subdivision. DOT&PF facilities in this area are the Steese Expressway, Johansen Expressway, and College Road. Access in this area is through the existing intersections on the Johansen Expressway and the Steese Expressway. The firm was interested in developing additional access points to the parcel. Mr. Rafson suggested FMATS take a more integrated approach to transportation in the area. The intent was to make FMATS aware of the access issues in the area and encourage all parties to participate in finding solutions to access problems in the Bentley Trust area.

Mr. Rafson also commented that there is possible access to the property that is currently blocked by the Alaska Railroad. The consultant informed DOT&PF that the Alaska Railroad was initially negative to a crossing in this area.

There is a proposed GO Bond project before the legislator to address access within the Old Steese and Johansen Expressway area.

**Adjourn (Whitaker/Hopkins) – 12:45 pm**

**Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting is February 20, 2008 at 10:00 am.**

Approved:

  
Steve Titus, Chair  
FMATS Policy Committee

Date:

